



Biosphere Buzz

Volume 7, Number 1 Winter Edition
January 2009



IT'S TIME FOR GREEN RESOLUTIONS

You have heard me before, ranting about greening up the world. I'm sure most of you are tired of being told how you can save water, reduce your carbon footprint, protect wildlife, etc., etc., etc. The problem as I see it, though, is that the average citizen in this area still hasn't made a serious effort to do many of these things. It's difficult for some people to be concerned about saving water as long as an ample supply comes out of the faucet, especially when they see a neighbor wasting hundreds of gallons watering a St. Augustine lawn in the middle of the day. So, we are not getting the job done on the massive scale we need.

We can't change the world but we can make a pledge to do everything possible on a personal level. If enough people do this it will make a difference. The reward is personal satisfaction and a better appreciation for the systems and cycles that make life on earth possible. It should also be an obligation to educate others, especially children, about the needs.

So, now is the time to evaluate our own daily lives to see what we can change. What is your own greatest environmental "sin" and what can you do to mitigate for it?

I'll confess to mine: I use too many paper towels. My college courses in bacteriology have turned me into somewhat of a germophobe. (Did you know that when we cultured a single dish towel that has been used to wipe a kitchen counter, we found 300 species of bacteria)? So I made a solemn resolve to try using fewer paper towels and I now compost the ones I use. My compost system gives me great pleasure and I have become a great earthworm fan. I recycle everything possible and have been amazed at the sheer volume I used to throw away. My landscape looks like a jungle with as much green as I can cram in one space—not tremendously attractive but I like to think about all the oxygen being generated and all the CO2 being removed as long as the sun shines. I even keep two hens in the backyard that recycle all the food scraps and even eat the weeds I pull.

Everyone should now come up with a resolution and pledge to determine everything they can do to be a little greener and to spread the word and encourage others to do the same. There may come a time when there is no water coming out of the faucet, when there is not enough power to do all the things we are accustomed to doing, when the air quality makes it impossible to go outside and when the weather is too hot to lead a normal life. If we wait for any of these things to happen, it will be too late!

Jim Thomas

Inside Biosphere Buzz

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Four-Inch Pots..... | 2 |
| We Want Leaves!..... | 2 |
| Winter - Time To | 2 |
| How to Get to Biosphere | 2 |
| A Functional Bioscape..... | 2 |
| TLC Corner (adopt one now!) . | 2 |
| .Planning a "Staycation"..... | 3 |
| Vegetable Gardening..... | 3 |
| Miss a Newsletter? | 3 |
| Plant a Tree | 3 |
| Happy New Year | 3 |
| We Are Famous! | 3 |
| Winter Events at Biosphere: | |
| Mark Your Calendars | 4 |

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Grand Opening Scheduled at Oakland Nature Preserve

The day has finally come when we will be able to show off our long awaited Environmental Education Center. We have scheduled an open house all day on Saturday, January 31 to welcome visitors into our new building. We will have some interesting displays including a demonstration of knapping, showing how the earliest residents here were able to make strong, sharp arrowhead points and how they made bows and arrows.

Guided tours throughout the preserve will be given from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Plan to attend this long-awaited occasion.

www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org.

Master Naturalist Program Orange County

A concentrated in-depth naturalist program for educators, docent volunteers or just interested people has been approved for Orange County, largely through the efforts of ONP volunteers. This program, sponsored by IFAS, will hold the first course in central Florida beginning February 23 and meeting Mondays and Thursdays through March 12 (6 sessions).

This program will be on Upland Habitats and will include classroom as well as field trip sessions to ONP.

The cost is \$225.00 and further information can be obtained at the website www.MasterNaturalist.org (click on Course Offerings and then on Uplands).

**Biosphere Consulting, Inc., 14908 Tilden Road, Winter Garden, Florida 34787
407-656-8277, BiosphereNursery.com**

Nursery open to the public, Monday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Four-Inch Pots Available

With the uncertain economy we are all facing, the installation of a new landscape may be more difficult for many. We are looking for ways we can help and have done all we could to lower prices. We have also decided to make available 4-inch pots of as many species as we can. A gardener can now have more species for lower costs. All it takes is a little patience. We also have put a number of trees in our TLC corner, all free to a good home.

We Want Leaves!

We think fallen leaves are a real resource that is often ignored or rejected by homeowners. This is nature's way of recycling nutrients back to the soil and for the landscape they make an excellent mulch. It always troubles us to see so many bags of leaves out to be taken to the landfill every spring. We would like to have all we can get for use in our garden and to make available to customers who don't have enough. We will give a 50-cent credit per bag so bring all you can!

Check Out Our TLC Corner

We are pulling trees as we begin up-potting them. If they are not beautiful but healthy, we put many of them in our TLC corner for adoption. We still believe no living thing should be put in the dumpster just because it isn't perfect. The TLC Corner is inside the white picket fence on the native plant mat and these plants are all free to a good home.

How to get to Biosphere

From Orlando, go west on Colonial Drive (Hwy 50) to Winter Garden. Turn south on CR 535 ((Daniels) and go 3-miles. Look for Tilden Road on the right side (we have a new stop light now—yea!). Turn right heading west on Tilden Road, go about 1 mile. Look for nursery on the left. Or you can go west on the East-West Expressway (408) to the end where it joins the Florida turnpike, take the first exit off (429) then exit immediately to 429 south. Exit at Winter Garden Vineland Road, (CR535), take a left at the stop light to Tilden Road, turn right on Tilden go 1 mile to the nursery on the left. If you are north of us take the 429 from Apopka heading south, you will exit on CR 535 (Winter Garden Vineland Road), take a left to Tilden and turn right on Tilden to nursery on left. If you have trouble and can't seem to find us - don't give up! Give us a call (407) 656 – 8277. We will be happy to help you find your way!

Winter – Time to.....

PLANT Flowers for Winter Color:

Alyssum, cleome, dianthus, gaillardia, lobelia, nasturtium, petunia and snapdragon.

PLANT Vegetables in the Garden:

Beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, collards, lettuce, mustard greens, onion sets, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach and turnips.

Plant warm weather seeds in a protected area, to be ready for out-planting in March: tomatoes squash, cucumbers, eggplants and peppers.

Reduce watering the lawn (if you still have one) to once a week.

Plant trees of all kinds while they are dormant (see our article on page 3 of this newsletter).

Prune dead or damaged limbs from trees but wait a while longer until fear of a freeze has passed to cut back clump grasses (muhly, sand cord grass, Fakahatchee grass, etc.) and shrubs that may have suffered from freeze damage. Wait until mid-March, after frost possibility is over.

Mulch now is the time to clean out beds and install new mulch. This is important to retain moisture and inhibit weeds. We like pine straw or oak leaves because they are natural and sustainable. If you don't like these, use pine bark or eucalyptus mulch. Under no circumstance should you use cypress mulch — it is not a sustainable product and cypress trees grow to slowly to be ground up for mulch. We have a good supply of pine straw bales and one bale should cover 30 square feet, three inches thick for \$5.25.

How to Convert a Traditional Landscape into a Functional Bioscape.

We have completed a draft of our educational flyer that is now on our website. Our recent workshop on this subject had a good turnout and some excellent discussions. (We have scheduled another workshop on February 28 for those of you who could not attend.) The flyer gives suggestions about how to proceed and includes lists of plants we recommend. Some clients are still having problems with Homeowners Associations and this is a battle we need to continue to fight. Consider working towards your bioscape.

Planning a "Staycation"?

Many people this year are planning to decrease or eliminate vacation plans and simply schedule a staycation. This is a great time to install that new landscape feature you want: a butterfly garden, a tropical patio, a koi pond or to rip out that lawn and create a bioscape. Let us help you plan it and enjoy your downtime admiring it!

Consider a Vegetable Garden

Many people today are asking about growing a vegetable garden in the landscape. We think it's a great idea and we are now planning one of our own. We should all be concerned about paying high prices for vegetables, grown far away, often in countries with lax regulations about pesticide usage, perhaps picked by someone with dirty hands and then shipped a long way, increasing our carbon footprints. There is no comparison between a tomato picked while still green and a luscious vine-ripened one.

We have done some experimenting to find out which types can be grown best here without using pesticides. We are working on a flyer that shows what grows well here and when to plant them. We have scheduled a workshop on Saturday, January 24 at 10:00 A.M. See our schedule for this and other workshops this spring.

We hope to grow some things that will be available from our own garden on a u-pick basis and we will be selling plants such as tomatoes, collards and others for small gardens.

The Ultimate Drought Tolerant Garden

We have been growing a number of Xeric plants that require almost no water at all. Some of these make a very interesting display in a rock garden that is sparsely planted with interesting plants. We have a demonstration garden on site and we are looking for more species. Come out and see what you think. Very different colors and textures - great for that corner where nothing will grow.

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Biosphere Buzz is published by Biosphere Consulting, LLC, and is sent free to interested parties.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

*"All Living Things are Connected...All Life is Precious"
 We still believe this and hope you will too!*



To save paper and money we made the decision not to send cards to our friends and clients this January but include our best wishes as part of our newsletter.

This is a Perfect Time to Plant a Tree

Trees are probably at the most dormant stage right now so this is the time to plant. They will require less water and will have time to form a new root system before the flush of spring growth, giving them a strong start. Remember, a tree sequesters a lot of carbon from the air as it grows and also gives off a lot of oxygen as it photosynthesizes. Did you realize that, if you measured the surface of each leaf on a large tree, you may see more than an acre of green surface is exposed to sunlight. Since the rate of photosynthesis is much faster than that of respiration, a surplus of oxygen is generated in one day.

Now We Are Famous!

The December issue of Ornamental Outlook features Biosphere on the cover and a very well-written article titled "Creatures of Habitat" which outlines our bioscaping program. Hope to have it up on the web soon to share with you!

Miss a past newsletter or one of our educational flyers? Considering restoration of your lakefront or pond? Wish you had an updated list of all the plants we sell? All this information and more is available on our website at

Save the Dates — Winter and Spring Events

Saturday, January 24

Biosphere invites you out to the nursery for a workshop on Organic Gardening to begin at 10:00 A.M. Many customers have asked about creating a garden in their landscapes. This makes a lot of sense. We will have this workshop to help you decide about how to set up your garden spot and how to culture organic growing medium and fertilize using a new process that involves worm farming. This is a fascinating project that allows the homeowner to convert food scraps and other household waste into valuable compost with no odor and very little space required. Bernie Moro of Our Vital Earth will show us the worm “condo” and Michael Spott, an experienced organic gardener will help us learn how to get ready for the Spring Garden!

All of our workshops at Biosphere are free.

Saturday, February 28

Biosphere invites you back to the nursery for a work shop on “How to Convert a Standard Landscape into a Bioscape” This workshop will begin at 10:00 A.M. and we will repeat the popular presentation we had a few months ago because of the interest we found in this project.

Saturday, March 21 and Sunday, March 22

Annual Harry P. Leu Garden’s Spring Plant Sale Over 10,000 visitors are expected this year at the two-day event open Saturday from 8:00 until 5:00 P.M. and Sunday from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. Free admission to the beautiful gardens where you can literally spend all day enjoying their colorful landscapes. For more information visit www.leugardens.org

Saturday, March 28

Workshop on Butterfly Gardening at Biosphere, The workshop will begin at 10:00 A.M. and focus on how to increase the butterfly population in your neighborhood!

Saturday, April 18 and Sunday, April 19

9th Annual Spring Fever in the Garden presented by Bloom’N Grow Garden Society This event just gets bigger and better every year. Now a two-day event in historic downtown Winter Garden. Scheduled from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. on Saturday and 11:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. on Sunday. For more information visit: www.springfeveringarden.com.

Saturday, April 25 and Sunday April 26

48th Annual Apopka Women’s Club Art and Foliage Festival. Yes, this event is the granddaddy of them all. Can you believe for 48 years these dedicated volunteers have been working to improve their community? Is it any wonder this event continues to be one of our favorites -- great turn outs encourage new vendors and it just keeps getting better and better. If you haven’t made this show part of your Spring outings plan to this year.

Saturday, May 16

Seminole Springs Antique Rose and Herb Farm Spring Show. This show is great fun and always a learning event as Tracy schedules speakers all day to help with such topics as landscaping your yard, butterfly gardening and creating a pond. Saturday from 10:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. only. For more information visit www.antiqueroseandherbfarm.com

Saturday, May 23

Workshop at Biosphere on Aquascaping this workshop will begin at 10:00 A.M. and will cover everything from creating a bog garden in your landscape to lakefront restoration and aquascaping of retention ponds.

Printed on Recycled Paper
(30% post-consumer waste)
With environmentally friendly soy ink

U.S. POSTAGE
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Permit No. 60013
Winter Garden, FL 34787

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